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20.7 (?) REPORT OF  
DRUG EXPENDITURE SURVEY

Published by Order of  
the Honourable John Munro  
Minister of National Health and Welfare



May 1970

Joseph M. Williams,  
Deputy Minister of National Welfare



# research and statistics **MEMO**

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Report of Drug Expenditure Survey 1967

Health Research Division  
Research and Statistics Directorate

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J. Maurice LeClair, M.D.  
Deputy Minister of National Health

Joseph W. Willard,  
Deputy Minister of National Welfare

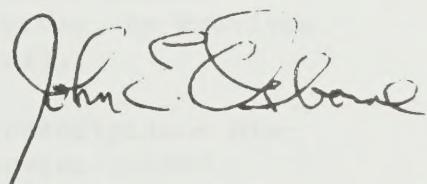


## FOREWORD

In May 1968, the Research and Statistics Directorate circulated a questionnaire entitled "Drug Expenditure Survey - 1967" to all pharmacies in Canada (excluding hospital pharmacies). The primary purpose of this survey was to obtain information on pharmacy sales during the year, as a check on existing data used to estimate the amount of personal health expenditures for prescribed drugs in Canada and each of the provinces. Additionally, it was hoped to obtain supplementary information not previously available on some characteristics of pharmacy manpower and prescription workloads.

This survey was very successful, with over three quarters of the pharmacies in Canada participating in the project. Success was due to the co-operation of pharmacy licensing bodies and professional organizations who encouraged pharmacists to respond to the questionnaire. We are also indebted to the Merchandising and Services Division of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics for their advice and assistance in preparing the questionnaire.

The survey was conducted by Dr. J.A. Bachynsky and Mr. A.F. Smith in our Health Research Division, with general direction in the preparation of the report by Mr. William A. Mennie, Principal Research Officer, (Health).



John E. Osborne,  
Director, Research and Statistics.

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## INTRODUCTION

Over the years the survey conducted annually by the Canadian Pharmaceutical Association (C.Ph.A.) and published in the Canadian Pharmaceutical Journal has been the best available source of data on pharmacy sales and expenses in Canada. It provides detailed analyses of retail pharmacy operations and trends in sales, expenses and profits. These analyses are extremely useful in studying and comparing selected groups of pharmacies, e.g. pharmacies with sales of \$60-80 thousand and pharmacies with sales of \$80-100 thousand. This type of analysis is the primary purpose of the annual compilation and it performs this function very well.

The C.Ph.A. survey also has been used to make estimates of total prescription sales, number of prescriptions dispensed, and average prescription price. For this purpose it is subject to a number of limitations, the major difficulty being that the response rate (the percentage of pharmacies participating) varies excessively from province to province. In 1967, for example, the range in response rate was from 1.6 per cent for Quebec to 28.8 per cent for New Brunswick. The national response rate was 12.5 per cent. This national response rate has been fairly constant over the period 1960-1967 ranging from 9.5 to 13.5.

A further problem in the use of the C.Ph.A. survey is that only some of the reporting pharmacies - in 1967 only 456 of 613 - reported prescription data. This effectively reduces the national sample from 12.5 per cent to 9.3 per cent. The stratification of the pharmacies reporting prescription data is unknown and because of this some of the ratios of prescriptions to total sales may be unreliable. To date, however, this survey has been the only source of data on the relationship of prescription sales to total pharmacy sales.

Total retail pharmacy sales are also reported by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics (D.B.S.) in their monthly Retail Trade Survey. For this survey a sample of all retail outlets is used, one component of which is pharmacies (drug stores). The pharmacies are, therefore, a sub-sample of the retail sample rather than a statistically random sample of all pharmacies. Unfortunately, this survey provides data on total sales only and does not give the proportion of sales generated by prescribed drugs. Another limitation, although not a serious one, is that pharmacies owned by, and operated in, department stores are included in department store sales.

It was believed that a survey designed to obtain a high response rate within each province would improve the accuracy of data on expenditures for prescribed drugs. Accordingly, it was decided to send each pharmacy in Canada a short questionnaire asking information on sales, prescriptions dispensed, and the number of pharmacists employed. The latter data would be used to analyze the distribution of pharmacists and their prescription workload.

### METHODOLOGY

Late in 1967 the Research and Statistics Directorate of the Department of National Health and Welfare embarked upon its Drug Expenditure Survey (D.E.S.). Before starting D.E.S., full discussions took place with responsible officers of D.B.S. and C.Ph.A. to avoid conflicting approaches, obtain advice, and, in the former case, to conform with the Statistics Act.

In May 1968 a questionnaire was mailed to all pharmacies in Canada (excluding hospital pharmacies) requesting data on their sales volume and number of pharmacists employed. The questionnaire is reproduced as Appendix A. Chain pharmacies, in some cases, provided aggregate data by province rather than for each individual outlet. This does not affect the provincial averages, but excludes some chain pharmacies from the analysis of individual pharmacy characteristics.

A follow-up mailing was made to all pharmacies that had not responded within three weeks. Three months after the initial mailing a total usable response of 76.2 per cent was achieved. The highest rate of response was obtained from British Columbia (87.4 per cent) and the lowest response (63.6 per cent) from Quebec as shown in Table 1.

The questionnaires were edited when they were returned and the information transferred to punched cards. An initial analysis was prepared by having the totals and tables printed by computer. From these initial results further analyses were prepared. These consist mainly of tables showing various relationships and comparisons between provinces. It should be noted that the Yukon and Northwest Territories are grouped with British Columbia for convenience in handling the data.<sup>(1)</sup>

Although the data are presented as (calendar year) 1967, some pharmacies reported financial data on the basis of their own bookkeeping year. Pharmacies were included in the tabulation if half or more of the bookkeeping year for which they reported was in the calendar year 1967.

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(1) There are only six pharmacies in the territories, so that they can have no appreciable effect on the characteristics tabulated for the British Columbia pharmacies.

Table 1

Response Rate to Drug Expenditure Survey and  
C.Ph.A. Survey, by Province, 1967

Province	Number of Pharmacies	D.N.H.&W. Drug Expenditure Survey		C.Ph.A. Survey	
		Usable Replies	Percent Response	Usable Replies	Per Cent Response*
			%		%
Newfoundland	81	57	70.4	5	5.8
Prince Edward Island	26	20	76.9	3	12.5
Nova Scotia	169	121	71.6	25	13.0
New Brunswick	104	84	80.8	30	28.8
Quebec	1,224	779	63.6	20	1.6
Ontario	1,719	1,387	80.7	193	11.3
Manitoba	283	209	73.9	41	14.4
Saskatchewan	326	278	85.3	83	25.7
Alberta	478	370	77.4	79	17.1
British Columbia	485	424	87.4	134	27.8
Canada	4,895	3,729	76.2	613	12.5

\*The per cent response in the C.Ph.A. survey is based on the number of pharmacies in each province as reported by the pharmacy registrars. This differs slightly from the figures used in the Drug Expenditure Study and shown in the first column of this table. The reason for the difference is that the registrars normally report the number of pharmacies at the end of the year, while the figures for the Drug Expenditure Survey are for May 1968, this being the date the survey-documents were mailed out.

Source: Drug Expenditure Survey 1967, and C.Ph.A. Annual Survey 1967, Canadian Pharmaceutical Journal, October 1968 (Hereinafter referred to as C.Ph.A. Annual Survey 1967).

PHARMACY SALES AND PRESCRIPTION DATA

Pharmacy Sales

Average sales per pharmacy from the D.E.S. vary from province to province, with average sales lowest in Saskatchewan (\$125,021) and highest in British Columbia (\$194,257). The figures for Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia are similar, while New Brunswick had a considerably higher average (Table 2). There was also a fairly uniform average sales figure for the prairie provinces, a finding consistent with their having similar retail pharmacy structures.

Projection of the pharmacy sales obtained from the respondents in the D.E.S. to all pharmacies gives a figure for total sales of \$767,429,000. This is considerably higher than the total pharmacy-sales estimates obtained from the D.B.S. Retail Trade survey but lower than the projection of pharmacy sales reported in the C.Ph.A. survey (Tables 3 and 4).

Total pharmacy sales by province, as estimated in D.E.S., tended to be higher than the D.B.S. estimates<sup>(1)</sup> but comparable to the C.Ph.A. results. In comparing the D.E.S. and C.Ph.A. Surveys, differences greater than 10 per cent were found for Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Alberta, and New Brunswick. The differences, expressed as the percentage by which C.Ph.A. exceeded D.E.S., were as follows:

<u>Province</u>	<u>Per Cent Difference</u>
Nova Scotia	37.5
Newfoundland	27.1
Alberta	15.7
New Brunswick	- 13.7

The data for three of the provinces with the highest deviation, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and New Brunswick, were biased in C.Ph.A. due to the over-representation of large pharmacies. In the case of Newfoundland this bias may be exaggerated by the small sample size in C.Ph.A. (five pharmacies, 5.8 per cent). However, the C.Ph.A. sample included 13 per cent of the pharmacies in Nova Scotia and 29 per cent of those in New Brunswick, so that one would have expected estimates more in line with D.E.S.

(1) D.B.S. estimates are from the D.B.S. Retail Trade survey. This is a monthly survey which employs the Link Relative Method of updating Census data. Consequently the data for 1967 are the D.B.S. estimates of pharmacy sales based on the 1961 Census.

Table 2

Total and Average Pharmacy Sales, Drug Expenditure Survey,  
by Province, 1967 (Includes chain pharmacies)

Province	Pharmacies Reporting Sales	Pharmacy Sales Reported	Average Sales per Reporting Pharmacy	Operating Pharmacies	Estimated Sales of Operating Pharmacies
Newfoundland	57	\$ 8,148,000	\$ 142,944	81	\$ 11,578,000
Prince Edward Island	20	2,952,000	147,588	26	3,837,000
Nova Scotia	121	17,057,000	140,970	169	23,824,000
New Brunswick	84	14,089,000	167,722	104	17,443,000
Quebec	779	124,118,000	159,330	1,224	195,020,000
Ontario	1,387	228,637,000	164,843	1,719	283,365,000
Manitoba	209	27,084,000	129,588	283	36,673,000
Saskatchewan	278	34,756,000	125,021	326	40,757,000
Alberta	370	46,998,000	127,021	478	60,716,000
British Columbia	424	82,365,000	194,257	485	94,215,000
Canada	3,729	586,203,000	157,201	4,895	767,429,000

Source: Drug Expenditure Survey 1967.

Table 3

Total Pharmacy Sales and Average Pharmacy Sales,  
C.Ph.A. Survey, by Province, 1967

Province	Pharmacies Reporting Sales	Pharmacy Sales Reported	Average Sales per Reporting Unit	Operating Pharmacies	Estimated Sales of Operating Pharmacies
Newfoundland	5	\$ 908,000	\$ 181,644	86	\$ 15,621,000
Prince Edward Island	3	423,000	141,104	24	3,386,000
Nova Scotia	25	4,845,000	193,785	192	37,207,000
New Brunswick	30	4,341,000	144,708	104	15,050,000
Quebec	20	3,464,000	173,197	1,241	214,937,000
Ontario	193	31,009,000	160,668	1,701	273,296,000
Manitoba	41	5,310,000	129,511	285	36,911,000
Saskatchewan	83	10,340,000	124,577	323	40,238,000
Alberta	79	11,608,000	146,938	461	67,738,000
British Columbia	134	28,493,000	212,635	482	102,490,000
Canada	613	100,741,000	163,939	4,899	806,875,000

Table 4

Average Pharmacy Sales, Drug Expenditure Survey and  
C.Ph.A. Survey, by Province, 1967

Province	Drug Expenditure Survey	Canadian Pharmaceutical Association	Per Cent Difference from D.E.S.
	\$	\$	%
Newfoundland	142,944	181,644	+ 27.1
Prince Edward Island	147,588	141,104	- 4.4
Nova Scotia	140,970	193,785	+ 37.5
New Brunswick	167,722	144,708	- 13.7
Quebec	159,330	173,197	+ 8.7
Ontario	164,843	160,668	- 2.5
Manitoba	129,588	129,511	- 0.1
Saskatchewan	125,021	124,577	- 0.4
Alberta	127,021	146,938	+ 15.7
British Columbia	194,257	212,635	+ 9.5
Canada	157,201	163,939	+ 4.3

Source: Drug Expenditure Survey 1967, C.Ph.A. Annual Survey 1967.

The results of the D.B.S. survey deviate from those of D.E.S. by more than 10 per cent for all the provinces except Manitoba, and in all cases the reported sales by D.B.S. were less than those of D.E.S. The deviations were as follows (Table 5):

<u>Province</u>	<u>Per Cent Difference</u>	<u>Province</u>	<u>Per Cent Difference</u>
Newfoundland	- 13.2	Ontario	- 12.3
Prince Edward Island	- 22.4	Manitoba	- 1.4
Nova Scotia	- 11.6	Saskatchewan	- 24.0
New Brunswick	- 11.8	Alberta	- 11.9
Quebec	- 12.0	British Columbia	- 21.3
	CANADA		- 13.5

The differences ranged from 1.4 to 24 per cent with three provinces, Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island, and British Columbia, having deviations greater than 20 per cent. The deviation for Prince Edward Island may be due to its small population and the small size of the D.B.S. sample, but one would expect less deviation for Saskatchewan and Alberta.

#### Prescription Sales

Total prescription sales in Canada were estimated at \$239,477,300 in 1967 from the D.E.S., compared to an estimate of \$241,000,400 from C.Ph.A. (Table 6). With respect to individual provinces, variation between the two surveys was greater, being over 10 per cent for the provinces of Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan and Alberta. In each case the C.Ph.A. estimate was larger.

The Composite Estimate<sup>(1)</sup> formerly used by the Department of National Health and Welfare gives a lower total value for sales and in most cases gives lower estimates of the provincial figures. This is probably a result of the lower D.B.S. figures for total pharmacy sales on which the estimate is based (Table 4). The other component of the estimating procedure, the proportion of prescription sales to pharmacy sales (C.Ph.A. survey), is much closer to the D.E.S. results (Table 9).

Average prescription sales varied markedly from a high of \$65,194 in New Brunswick to \$36,477 in Saskatchewan. The prairie provinces were below the national average of \$48,508 as were the Maritimes with the exception of New Brunswick (Table 7).

(1) The Composite Estimate consisted of applying the proportion of prescription sales to total sales, as reported in the C.Ph.A. Annual Surveys, to the total pharmacy sales reported by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics.

Table 5

Estimated Total Pharmacy Sales, Three Surveys,  
by Province, 1967

Province	Operating Pharmacies	Drug Expenditure Survey	Canadian Pharmaceutical Association Survey	Dominion Bureau of Statistics Retail Trade Survey
		(\$'000)	(\$'000)	(\$'000)
Newfoundland	81	11,578	15,621	10,051
Prince Edward Island	26	3,837	3,386	2,979
Nova Scotia	169	23,824	37,207	21,064
New Brunswick	104	17,443	15,050	15,037
Quebec	1,224	195,020	214,937	171,598
Ontario	1,719	283,365	273,296	248,493
Manitoba	283	36,673	36,911	36,172
Saskatchewan	326	40,757	40,238	30,960
Alberta	478	60,716	67,738	53,504
British Columbia	485	94,215	102,490	74,181
Canada	4,895	767,429	806,875	664,036

Source: Drug Expenditure Survey 1967, C.Ph.A. Annual Survey 1967,  
Retail Trade D.B.S. 1967.

Table 6

Total Prescription Sales, based on Drug Expenditure Survey,  
C.Ph.A. Survey and Composite Method, by Province, 1967

Province	Drug Expenditure Survey	Canadian Pharmaceutical Association	Composite Estimate (D.B.S. and C.Ph.A.)
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Newfoundland	3,049.8	3,281.4	2,918.6
Prince Edward Island	1,118.4	958.3	967.9
Nova Scotia	7,714.7	9,117.7	6,696.0
New Brunswick	6,779.7	6,782.6	6,520.6
Quebec	72,360.0	67,586.8	70,442.9
Ontario	82,573.3	86,850.8	77,187.3
Manitoba	10,326.1	10,796.2	11,859.8
Saskatchewan	12,371.2	14,745.6	10,169.6
Alberta	18,201.8	22,159.6	18,319.8
British Columbia	24,982.6	24,259.2	16,516.9
Canada	239,477.3	241,000.4	221,599.3

Source: Drug Expenditure Survey 1967, C.Ph.A. Annual Survey 1967.

The average prescription sales reported are similar to those of the C.Ph.A. survey but with significant differences for the provinces of Alberta (21.7 per cent), Saskatchewan (19.2 per cent), Nova Scotia (18.2 per cent), and Prince Edward Island (14.3 per cent). The C.Ph.A. survey gives higher average sales for 7 of the 10 provinces.

The ratio of prescription sales to total sales found in D.E.S. ranges from 26.3 per cent in Newfoundland to 38.9 per cent in New Brunswick (Table 8). Interestingly, Ontario and the western provinces were all below the national average of 31.2 per cent, while the only provinces above the national average were east of Ontario.

The C.Ph.A. survey produced comparable figures with a range of 22.4 per cent (British Columbia) to 42.8 per cent (New Brunswick) and a national average of 29.4 per cent. In comparing individual provinces there was agreement within 5 per cent, except for Nova Scotia where a deviation of 6.1 per cent was recorded (Table 9).

The D.E.S. showed that the proportion prescriptions were of total sales in individual pharmacies decreased as the total sales of the pharmacies increased (Table 10). Almost a quarter (23.0 per cent) of the pharmacies with sales of \$100,000 or less obtained at least half their sales volume from prescriptions. In comparison, only 10.3 per cent of pharmacies with sales volumes of \$300,000 to \$400,000 obtained over half their income from prescriptions.

#### Number of Prescriptions Dispensed

The total number of prescriptions dispensed through pharmacies in 1967 was calculated to be 71,793,180 based on the D.E.S. Projections based on the C.Ph.A. survey gave 69,232,326 prescriptions, a difference of only 3.6 per cent. While the totals are in close agreement some of the provincial estimates are more disparate. The greatest difference was found for Nova Scotia where C.Ph.A. data gave a value 18.9 per cent greater. Alberta, Quebec, and Saskatchewan also had deviations of over 10 per cent. In general there was close agreement. This means that the data from C.Ph.A. are sufficiently reliable to be used in making projections on a national basis with only slight corrections for a few provinces (Tables 11, 12 and 13).

Table 7

Average Prescription Sales,  
Drug Expenditure Survey, C.Ph.A. Survey,  
by Province, 1967

Province	Drug Expenditure Survey	Canadian Pharmaceutical Association
	\$	\$
Newfoundland	37,654	40,511
Prince Edward Island	43,016	36,859
Nova Scotia	45,650	53,951
New Brunswick	65,194	65,217
Quebec	59,127	55,218
Ontario	48,054	50,524
Manitoba	36,477	38,149
Saskatchewan	37,948	45,232
Alberta	38,079	46,359
British Columbia	51,509	50,019
Canada	48,508	49,234

Source: Drug Expenditure Survey 1967, C.Ph.A. Annual Survey, 1967

Table 8

Prescription Sales as a Proportion of Pharmacy Sales,  
by Province, 1967  
(includes chain pharmacies)

Province	Pharmacy Sales	Prescription Sales	Prescription Sales as a Per Cent of Total
	\$	\$	%
Newfoundland	11,578,464	3,049,835	26.3
Prince Edward Island	3,837,288	1,118,410	29.1
Nova Scotia	23,823,930	7,714,736	32.4
New Brunswick	17,443,088	6,779,652	38.9
Quebec	195,019,920	72,359,686	37.1
Ontario	283,365,117	82,573,317	29.1
Manitoba	36,673,404	10,326,074	28.2
Saskatchewan	40,756,846	12,371,175	30.4
Alberta	60,716,038	18,201,798	30.0
British Columbia	94,214,645	24,982,615	26.5
Canada	767,428,740	239,477,298	31.2

Source: Drug Expenditure Survey 1967

Table 9

Prescription Sales as a Proportion of Pharmacy Sales, A Comparison of the C.Ph.A. Survey and the Drug Expenditure Survey,  
by Province, 1967.

Province	Prescription Sales as a Per Cent of Total Sales		Difference in percentage points
	Drug Expenditure Survey	C.Ph.A. Annual Survey	
	%	%	
Newfoundland	26.3	27.4	+ 1.1
Prince Edward Island	29.1	32.5	+ 3.4
Nova Scotia	32.4	26.3	- 6.1
New Brunswick	38.9	42.8	+ 3.9
Quebec	37.1	36.6	- 0.5
Ontario	29.1	30.6	+ 1.5
Manitoba	28.2	33.3	+ 5.1
Saskatchewan	30.4	34.3	+ 3.9
Alberta	30.0	31.6	+ 1.6
British Columbia	26.5	22.4	- 4.1
Canada	31.2	29.4	- 1.8

Source: Drug Expenditure Survey 1967, C.Ph.A. Annual Survey 1967.

Table 10

Prescription Sales as a Proportion of  
Pharmacy Sales by Sales Volume of the Pharmacy, 1967.

Sales Volume of Pharmacy	Prescription Sales as a Per Cent of Pharmacy Sales						
	0-20	20-30	30-40	40-50	50-75	75-100	Total
\$	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
0 - 100,000	16.5	23.3	23.3	13.9	13.4	9.6	100.0
100,001 - 200,000	15.9	30.4	24.2	15.3	11.4	2.7	99.9
200,001 - 300,000	24.5	29.2	21.3	11.3	10.8	2.9	100.0
300,001 - 400,000	31.9	29.3	19.8	8.6	6.9	3.4	99.9
400,001 and over	51.0	20.0	17.0	4.0	8.0	0.0	100.0

Table 11

Total and Average Number of Prescriptions Dispensed,  
Drug Expenditure Survey, by Province, 1967  
(includes chain pharmacies)

Province	Number of Pharmacies Reporting Prescriptions Dispensed	Number of Prescriptions Dispensed	Average Number of Prescriptions Dispensed	Operating Pharmacies	Estimated Number of Prescriptions Dispensed
Newfoundland	57	704,382	12,358	81	1,000,927
Prince Edward Island	20	244,072	12,204	28	317,294
Nova Scotia	120	1,758,437	14,654	169	2,476,407
New Brunswick	84	1,554,664	18,508	104	1,924,674
Quebec	778	14,016,037	18,016	1,224	22,047,226
Ontario	1,388	19,738,595	14,221	1,719	24,436,381
Manitoba	208	2,374,184	11,414	283	3,231,264
Saskatchewan	277	3,089,501	11,153	326	3,636,034
Alberta	365	3,834,550	10,506	478	5,021,727
British Columbia	424	6,732,447	15,878	485	7,701,246
Canada	3,721	54,046,869	14,667	4,895	71,793,180

Source: Drug Expenditure Survey 1967.

Table 12

Total and Average Number of Prescriptions Dispensed, Canadian Pharmaceutical Association Survey, by Province, 1967

Province	Number of Pharmacies Reporting*	Number of Prescriptions Dispensed	Average Number of Prescriptions Dispensed	Operating Pharmacies	Estimated Number of Prescriptions Dispensed
Newfoundland	5	62,495	12,499	81	1,012,419
Prince Edward Island	3	34,317	11,439	26	297,414
Nova Scotia	25	435,750	17,430	169	2,945,670
New Brunswick	30	505,530	16,851	104	1,752,504
Quebec	20	317,340	15,867	1,224	19,421,208
Ontario	193	2,676,524	13,868	1,719	23,839,092
Manitoba	41	442,513	10,793	283	3,054,419
Saskatchewan	83	1,047,128	12,616	326	4,112,816
Alberta	79	946,262	11,978	478	5,725,484
British Columbia	134	1,953,720	14,580	485	7,071,300
Canada	613	8,421,579	14,143	4,895	69,232,326

\* Of which 456 supplied data on prescription data. A provincial breakdown of these data are not available.

Source: C.Ph.A. Annual Survey 1967.

Table 13

Total Number of Prescriptions Dispensed, Drug Expenditure Survey and Canadian Pharmaceutical Association Survey, by Province, 1967

Province	D.E.S. Estimated Total Prescriptions Dispensed	C.Ph.A. Estimated Total Prescriptions Dispensed	Per Cent Difference from D.E.S.
Newfoundland	1,000,927	1,012,419	+ 1.1
Prince Edward Island	317,294	297,414	- 6.3
Nova Scotia	2,476,407	2,945,670	+ 18.9
New Brunswick	1,924,674	1,752,504	- 8.9
Quebec	22,047,226	19,421,208	- 11.9
Ontario	24,436,381	23,839,092	- 2.4
Manitoba	3,231,264	3,054,419	- 5.5
Saskatchewan	3,636,034	4,112,816	+ 13.1
Alberta	5,021,727	5,725,484	+ 14.0
British Columbia	7,701,300	7,071,246	- 8.2
Canada	71,793,180	69,232,326	- 3.6

Source: Drug Expenditure Survey 1967, C.Ph.A. Annual Survey 1967.

#### Average Prescription Price

Average prescription prices were calculated by dividing total prescription sales by the number of prescriptions dispensed. This was done for each province and for the national totals. The results of the D.E.S. show lower average prescription prices than for C.Ph.A. survey in 8 of the 10 provinces. Only in Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia are higher average values found (Table 14).

When ranked by province there is a significant degree of rank correlation ( $p = 0.10$ ) with a Spearman Rank Co-efficient of 0.612. In the ranking, Prince Edward Island ranks second in the D.E.S. tabulation but only seventh in the C.Ph.A. survey. The other provinces are generally consistent in their rank order.

In the D.E.S. the average prescription price for each pharmacy (except chain pharmacies) was calculated. The data for all pharmacies were then grouped by average price and their distribution tabulated by province (Table 15).

As would be expected, those provinces with higher average price, Alberta and New Brunswick, had a low proportion of their pharmacies in the groups having an average price of \$3.00 or less. Newfoundland alone had over 50 per cent of its pharmacies reporting prescriptions dispensed at an average cost of less than \$3.01. The provinces with the highest proportion of pharmacies reporting average prescription prices of over \$4.00 were Alberta (29.2 per cent), New Brunswick (27.8 per cent) and Ontario (21.0 per cent).

In Canada, almost 54 per cent of the pharmacies reported average prescription prices between \$3.01 and \$4.00. About 26 per cent had lower average charges and about 20 per cent had higher average charges.

#### Method of Prescription Pricing

Over the period 1965-1970 pharmacists have been changing rapidly from a pricing method based essentially on the cost of the material dispensed to a method which also takes into account the average cost involved in dispensing a prescription. The former method, based on a mark-up, came into being during the period 1940-1950 when pharmaceutical products manufactured by the pharmaceutical industry replaced the prescriptions prepared in the pharmacy by the pharmacist. The manufactured prescription products were priced in the same manner as manufactured non-prescription items (mark-up system); however, because there was an added handling expense for prescriptions an additional charge of 25 to 75 cents was often added. For example a bottle of vitamins that had a suggested retail price of \$5.00 would be sold on prescription for \$5.25. Where the prescription called for a quantity less than that supplied by the manufacturer there was usually a higher percentage mark-up or a larger handling charge for dispensing less than a full bottle.

Table 14

Average Prescription Prices, by Province, 1967

Province	Canadian Pharmaceutical Association	Drug Expenditure Survey
	\$	\$
Newfoundland	3.24	3.05
Prince Edward Island	3.22	3.53
Nova Scotia	3.09	3.16
New Brunswick	3.87	3.52
Quebec	3.48	3.28
Ontario	3.64	3.38
Manitoba	3.53	3.20
Saskatchewan	3.58	3.40
Alberta	3.87	3.63
British Columbia	3.43	3.24
Canada	3.57	3.34

Source: Drug Expenditure Survey 1967, C.Ph.A. Annual Survey 1967.

Table 15

## Distribution of Average Prescription Price, by Province, 1967

- 21 -

Province	Distribution of Average Prescription Price						Total %
	Under \$2.50	\$2.51-3.00	\$3.01-3.50	\$3.51-4.00	\$4.01-4.50	Over \$4.51	
Newfoundland	25.5	25.5	27.7	12.8	6.4	2.1	100.0
Prince Edward Island	7.7	30.8	38.5	15.4	-	7.7	100.0
Nova Scotia	14.0	22.8	30.7	20.2	8.8	3.5	100.0
New Brunswick	6.9	11.1	12.5	41.7	22.2	5.6	100.0
Quebec	13.9	18.1	21.2	26.1	10.6	10.0	100.0
Ontario	9.6	14.9	27.4	27.1	13.6	7.4	100.0
Manitoba	11.8	17.4	39.5	23.6	4.1	3.6	100.0
Saskatchewan	11.7	13.8	23.3	31.2	14.6	5.4	100.0
Alberta	6.8	8.1	20.5	35.4	18.6	10.6	100.0
British Columbia	7.4	16.5	38.4	19.4	10.0	8.4	100.0
Canada	10.7	15.6	26.7	26.9	12.5	7.7	100.0

Source: Drug Expenditure Survey 1967.

This was justified because more work was involved and also because the remaining drugs, if not dispensed, would leave the pharmacist with a costly inventory of dead stock. Some variations of this pricing method were printed in pricing charts and distributed to pharmacists by pharmacy organizations as an aid in calculating the prescription price. This procedure has now been discontinued.

The average cost of the prescription drugs dispensed increased over the decade 1950-1960 and, because of the pricing structure, the pharmacists' average charge for dispensing also increased. More important, the range of the charges for dispensing (above the cost of the medication) a prescription widened. A prescription for phenobarbital might yield 30 cents for a pharmacist while a prescription for prednisone might yield \$11.00, even though the time and skill involved were essentially the same. As a result, a method of pricing called the "professional fee" was advocated.

The professional fee calls for a single uniform fee to be applied to the wholesale cost of the drug for all prescriptions dispensed. The fee charges usually fall in the range \$1.50 - \$2.50. Since pharmacists find it difficult to transfer from one method to another there is often a combination of pricing methods used during an interim period.

The leaders in pharmacy who advocate the use of a professional fee recommend that the pharmacists, in changing from one method to the other, attempt to set a fee that will yield about the same gross revenue on prescription sales. When this is done there is little effect on the average prescription price, but it does increase the price of low cost medication and lower the price of more expensive medication. Generally those prescriptions priced at four dollars or less under the traditional mark-up system would increase in price while those over four dollars would decrease. Once this change is made the pricing method is no longer influenced by the wholesale cost of the drugs but rather by the expenses incurred in dispensing.

If should also be noted that there is now a strong trend for pharmacies to charge a uniform fee throughout a region or province. This is usually the fee accepted by third parties for reimbursing pharmacists and it is altered only on a periodic basis usually as a result of negotiations.

The change in pricing method is important because it provides relief for those persons who must obtain expensive medication and also because it influences price changes. When expensive medication is prescribed, the addition of a high charge by the pharmacist, based on a mark-up, places a double burden on the patient. This situation has been one of the underlying reasons for the complaints about the price of prescribed drugs. The professional fee reduces this problem and also dampens the effect of price changes. Under the old system a price increase of \$1.00 to the wholesale cost of the drug would increase the charge to the patient by \$1.40 for a full container and proportionately more on smaller quantities. In contrast, the use of the fee would add the \$1.00 cost to the patients' prescription price without inflating it.

This consideration is important in light of the present attempts to reduce prescription prices since a 5 per cent decrease in wholesale cost will likely be passed on, not as a 5 per cent decrease in the prescription price but by some lesser percentage, since the final price is higher than the wholesale price.

The C.Ph.A. survey for 1965 reported that about 40 per cent of the pharmacies reporting prescription data in their survey were using the professional fee method of pricing. The proportion in each province varied widely (Table 16). Ontario and Manitoba were the only provinces in which the professional fee was used in the majority of the pharmacies.

In the period 1965-1967, several provinces in addition to Ontario and Manitoba had the majority of their pharmacists accept the professional fee method. The provinces where the professional fee became the accepted pricing method were Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. In Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island about half the pharmacies are on the fee method. Only in Quebec does the traditional pricing method remain predominant (Table 17).

An important factor in the rapid adoption of the professional fee by pharmacists was the acceptance of this method by provincial welfare authorities. By negotiating reimbursement on a fee basis pharmacists were given a chance to use and evaluate this system of pricing prescriptions. On finding it to their liking, and being encouraged to use it by pharmacy organizations, they began pricing all prescriptions in this way rather than just welfare prescriptions.

The growth of third-party-payment programs has had a significant impact on prescription pricing in that the provincially negotiated fee is usually taken as the standard charge and used by pharmacists for all prescriptions. By having to negotiate changes in this fee pharmacists are required to justify any proposed changes. Since the fee is based on dispensing costs rather than the price of the drug the single most important cost is the pharmacists' salary.

The significance of a professional fee in pricing prescriptions is that the wholesale cost of the drug is less important and changes in wholesale cost have less effect on prescription prices. Also, pharmacists' salaries are now a key variable in prescription prices.

Table 16

Proportion of Pharmacies Using Professional Fee,  
C.Ph.A. Survey 1965

Province	Number Reporting Prescription Data	Number Using Professional Fee	Percentage
Nova Scotia	32	1	3.1
New Brunswick	22	4	18.2
Quebec	9	1	11.1
Ontario	125	98	78.4
Manitoba	32	27	84.4
Saskatchewan	70	5	7.1
Alberta	51	18	35.3
British Columbia	92	25	27.2
Other	9	-	-
Canada	442	179	40.5

Source: C.Ph.A. Annual Survey 1965, Canadian Pharmaceutical Journal, September 1966.

Table 17

Proportion of Pharmacies Using Professional Fee,  
Drug Expenditure Survey, 1967

Province	Number of Pharmacies Reporting	Number Using Professional Fee	Percentage
Newfoundland	49	23	46.9
Prince Edward Island	19	9	47.4
Nova Scotia	118	69	58.5
New Brunswick	82	63	76.8
Quebec	778	251	32.3
Ontario	1,242	851	68.5
Manitoba	203	172	84.7
Saskatchewan	263	191	72.6
Alberta	340	300	88.2
British Columbia	320	252	78.8
Canada	3,414	2,181	63.9

Source: Drug Expenditure Survey 1967.

### PHARMACY STAFFING AND WORKLOAD

#### Pharmacy Staffing

The D.E.S. received a response from 3,188 pharmacies employing about 6,547 full-time-equivalent pharmacists. The pharmacies have been grouped by the number of pharmacists employed (Table 18). From this we can see that the most common form of practice, for almost half the pharmacists, is the pharmacy with two pharmacists. The next most common is the pharmacy with three pharmacists, with 25.7 per cent of all pharmacists employed in this setting. The one-man pharmacy employs only 14.1 per cent of the pharmacists.

The distribution of pharmacists by pharmacy size varies from province to province (Table 19). Pharmacies with only one pharmacist are still relatively important in Prince Edward Island (24.0 per cent); Saskatchewan (31.6 per cent); and Alberta (22.2 per cent); in the remainder of the provinces more pharmacists are employed in pharmacies with either two or three pharmacists. New Brunswick stands out by having almost 12 per cent of its pharmacists in pharmacies with over five pharmacists, and almost five per cent in outlets with over eight pharmacists. This is reflected in New Brunswick's average number of pharmacists per pharmacy, 2.56, a figure higher than any other province. Nova Scotia was next with 2.53, then in descending order were British Columbia, Ontario, Newfoundland, and Quebec. The remainder of the provinces had an average of less than two pharmacists per pharmacy.

To calculate the full-time equivalents, part-time pharmacists were recorded as 0.5 pharmacist. Projection of these data to the total number of pharmacies in Canada provides an estimate of 10,082 pharmacists (FTE) in community pharmacy.

#### Pharmacists' Workload

The distribution of workload for each size of pharmacy shows that 30 per cent of the pharmacies had an average workload per pharmacist of less than 5,000 prescriptions per year. Based on a work year of 250 days, this is less than 20 prescriptions per day. Almost a third of the pharmacies with two or three pharmacists dispensed less than 5,000 prescriptions per pharmacist (Table 20). For the total sample 46.5 per cent of the pharmacies fell into the range of 5,000 to 10,000 prescriptions per pharmacist (Table 21).

Table 18

Distribution of Pharmacists by Number  
of Pharmacists Employed per Pharmacy

Number of Pharmacists	Number of Pharmacies	Total Number of Pharmacists	Per Cent of Pharmacists
0.0 - 1.0	922	922	14.1
1.5 - 2.0	1,501	3,002	45.9
2.5 - 3.0	560	1,680	25.7
3.5 - 4.0	135	540	8.2
4.5 - 5.0	42	210	3.2
5.5 - 6.0	15	90	1.4
6.5 - 8.0	7	49	.7
8.5 - 10.0	6	54	.8
10.5 and over	0	0	0
Total	3,188	6,547	100.0

Source: Drug Expenditure Survey 1967

Table 19

Percentage Distribution of Pharmacists by Number of Pharmacists Employed per Pharmacy, by Province, 1967  
(chain pharmacies excluded)

Number of Pharmacists per Pharmacy	Newfoundland	Prince Edward Island	Nova Scotia	New Brunswick	Quebec	Ontario	Manitoba	Saskatchewan	Alberta	British Columbia	Canada
0.0 - 1.0	11.2	24.0	3.1	5.7	15.2	11.3	14.3	31.6	22.2	10.9	14.1
1.5 - 2.0	55.1	64.0	34.4	35.4	4.07	49.5	56.1	40.0	49.6	43.8	45.8
2.5 - 3.0	15.3	12.0	44.3	28.1	26.0	26.1	22.2	17.3	19.8	29.1	25.6
3.5 - 4.0	8.2	-	16.5	16.7	11.3	6.8	3.2	5.8	6.7	7.1	8.2
4.5 - 5.0	10.2	-	1.7	2.6	4.6	2.4	2.6	2.4	1.7	5.1	3.2
5.5 - 6.0	-	-	-	3.1	1.7	1.5	1.6	2.9	-	.9	1.4
6.5 - 8.0	-	-	-	3.7	0.5	0.6	-	-	-	3.1	.9
8.5 - 10.0	-	-	-	4.7	-	1.8	-	-	-	-	.8
10.5 & over	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Average number of Pharmacists per Pharmacy	2.09	1.67	2.53	2.56	2.07	2.11	1.95	1.67	1.80	2.18	2.06

Source: Drug Expenditure Survey 1967.

Table 20

Average Number of Prescriptions Dispensed  
per Pharmacist (in 000's per year),  
Pharmacies Distributed by Number of Pharmacists Employed

Number of Pharmacists per Pharmacy	Average Number of Prescriptions Dispensed per Pharmacist					
	Less than 5	5 to 10	10 to 15	15 to 20	20 and over	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
0.0 - 1.0	25.1	40.0	21.1	6.0	7.8	100.0
1.5 - 2.0	33.0	50.0	12.4	2.9	1.6	99.9
2.5 - 3.0	32.1	48.8	15.4	2.7	1.1	100.1
3.5 - 4.0	23.7	45.9	23.7	3.7	3.0	100.0
4.5 - 5.0	26.2	40.5	31.0	2.4	0.0	100.1
5.5 - 6.0	13.3	46.7	33.3	6.7	0.0	100.0
6.5 - 8.0	0.0	57.1	28.6	0.0	14.3	100.0
8.5 - 10.0	66.7	16.7	16.7	0.0	0.0	100.1
10.5 and over	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-
Total	30.0	46.5	16.3	3.8	3.4	100.0

Source: Drug Expenditure Survey 1967.

Table 21

Average Number of Prescriptions Dispensed  
per Pharmacist per Year (in 000's),  
by Number of Pharmacists Employed

Number of Pharmacists per Pharmacy	Average Number of Prescriptions Dispensed per Pharmacist					Total
	Less than 5	5 to 10	10 to 15	15 to 20	20 and over	
0.0 - 1.0	231	369	195	55	72	922
1.5 - 2.0	496	751	186	44	24	1,501
2.5 - 3.0	180	273	86	15	6	560
3.5 - 4.0	32	62	32	5	4	135
4.5 - 5.0	11	17	13	1	0	42
5.5 - 6.0	2	7	5	1	0	15
6.5 - 8.0	0	4	2	0	1	7
8.5 - 10.0	4	1	1	0	0	6
10.5 and over	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	956	1,484	520	121	107	3,188

Source: Drug Expenditure Survey 1967.

It can be seen that an improved utilization of pharmacists takes place as the number of pharmacists employed increases. This is most evident when one looks at the proportion of pharmacies dispensing fewer than 10,000 prescriptions per pharmacist per year. While 83.0 per cent of the pharmacies with 1.5 - 2.0 pharmacists dispensed fewer than this number per pharmacist, the proportion falls to 57.1 per cent of those pharmacies employing 6.5 - 8.0 pharmacists.

The median prescription workload for each size of pharmacy ranges from 3,500 to 8,900 prescriptions per year. The median value tends to increase as the number of pharmacists increases (Table 22). The two exceptions to this trend are the pharmacies with either one pharmacist or 8.5 - 10 pharmacists. In the case of pharmacies with one pharmacist this result may be due to longer hours of work, a factor not considered in our survey. The results from the large pharmacies, 8.5 - 10 pharmacists, were unexpected and the reasons for the poor utilization of pharmacists is not known.

By dividing the total number of prescriptions dispensed (71,793,180) by the number of pharmacists (10,082), an average prescription workload of 7,121 prescriptions per pharmacist per year is obtained. This is in agreement with the results as tabulated in Table 20. Compared to Table 22, however, the average calculated is below the median values for each size of pharmacy except for pharmacies with 8.5 - 10 pharmacists. These differences may be due to the inclusion of the chain pharmacies in the aggregate average.

Table 22

Median Number of Prescriptions Dispensed per Pharmacist  
by Number of Pharmacists Employed

Number of Pharmacists per Pharmacy	Median Number of Prescriptions Dispensed per Pharmacist (in 1,000's)
0.0 - 1.0	8.1
1.5 - 2.0	7.3
2.5 - 3.0	7.3
3.5 - 4.0	7.8
4.5 - 5.0	7.7
5.5 - 6.0	8.1
6.5 - 8.0	8.9
8.5 - 10.0	3.5
10.5 and over	-

Source: Drug Expenditure Survey 1967

#### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The total sales of all pharmacies in Canada were estimated to be about \$767,429,000 in 1967. This agrees with an estimate, based on a projection of C.Ph.A. survey data, of \$806,875,000. The difference between these two estimates is 5.1 per cent. In comparing the average pharmacy sales by province there was a difference of over 10 per cent in four provinces with the greatest difference recorded for Nova Scotia at 37.5 per cent.

The total sales of prescriptions in Canada were calculated to be \$239,477,300 in 1967. Data from the C.Ph.A. survey resulted in an estimate of \$241,000,400. These two estimates are extremely close and appear to be more accurate than the method based on D.B.S. pharmacy sales which gives sales of \$221,599,300.

Average prescription sales for Canadian pharmacies are about \$48,500. On a provincial basis the range of prescription sales is from \$36,477 in Manitoba to \$65,194 in New Brunswick.

Prescription sales as a proportion of pharmacy sales are 3.12 per cent for Canada with a range of 26.3 per cent (Newfoundland) to 38.9 per cent (New Brunswick). Similar data are reported in the C.Ph.A. survey. A lower proportion of prescription sales to total sales was found as the total sales of the pharmacies increased.

Over half the pharmacies reported an average prescription price between \$3.01 and \$4.00. Newfoundland had over half its pharmacies reporting an average prescription price of \$3.00 or less while, in contrast, Alberta had only about 15 per cent of the pharmacies reporting an average prescription price of \$3.00 or less. Alberta also had the highest proportion of pharmacies (10.6 per cent) reporting average prescription prices of over \$4.50.

It was found that about 64 per cent of the pharmacies priced prescriptions on a professional fee basis. This method was used by the majority of pharmacies in each province with the exception of Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island, where only about half the pharmacies have this method, and Quebec where about one third of the pharmacies report using the professional fee. This will result in pharmacists' wages and other expenses associated with dispensing being more important in assessing prescription prices.

Two pharmacists in a pharmacy is the most common type of pharmacy staffing with about 46 per cent of community pharmacists employed in this type of pharmacy. While there are almost twice as many pharmacies with one pharmacist as there are with three pharmacists, more pharmacists are employed in the three pharmacist pharmacy. The majority of pharmacies (2,423 out of 3,188) are characterized by having two or less pharmacists. On this basis it can be said that this is the typical form of practice.

About half the pharmacies (46.5 per cent) have pharmacists dispense between 5,000 and 10,000 prescriptions each year, while 30 per cent of the pharmacies reported that the pharmacists average less than 5,000 prescriptions per year. It appears that in almost a third of the pharmacies that the pharmacists services are underutilized.

APPENDIX A

DRUG EXPENDITURE SURVEY - 1967

Department of National Health and Welfare

Instructions

Please provide information for calendar year 1967. If a different period is used, indicate this on the bottom of the questionnaire.

For official  
use only

1. What is the approximate annual total revenue (sales) of your pharmacy?

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

(c.c. 1-8)

2. What is the approximate annual prescription revenue?

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

(c.c. 9-14)

3. What is the approximate total number of all prescriptions dispensed each year including refills?

\_\_\_\_\_

(c.c. 15-20)

4. What is the approximate annual revenue (sales) of nonprescribed drugs (O-T-C, proprietary, patent medicines etc.)?

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

(c.c. 21-26)

5. Mark the prescription pricing method that best describes your pricing of prescriptions.

(c.c. 27)

- Wholesale of Invoice plus a fee \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (e.g. mark up plus a fee) \_\_\_\_\_

1

2

6. How many persons authorized to dispense are normally employed in the pharmacy?

Full time \_\_\_\_\_

(c.c. 28-29)

Part time \_\_\_\_\_

(c.c. 30-31)





